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STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACCIDENT AT THE CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT

Report by the Executive Secretary

1. This report is prepared in accordance with paragraph 6 of decision J (48) and contains an account of the Commission's activities in this field since the forty-eighth session.

2. At its forty-eighth session the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/206 on strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, which "Requests the Secretary-General to continue the activities related to the follow-up to its resolutions 45/190, 46/150 and 47/165 and, in particular, to continue to maintain close contacts with the Commission of the European Communities and regional and other relevant organizations, with a view to encouraging the regular exchange of information, cooperation, coordination and complementarity in the multilateral and bilateral efforts in those areas, while implementing programmes and specific projects."

3. The secretariat has maintained cooperation with the United Nations Coordinator for international cooperation to the regions affected by the accident. It has also participated in the Inter-Agency Task Force established under the terms of General Assembly resolution 45/190, as well as in the Ministerial Quadripartite meeting which took place in Geneva on the occasion of the 1993 regular session of ECOSOC. ECE was represented by the Regional

Commissions New York Office at the Second Quadripartite meeting held in New York on 17 November 1993. At the meeting the delegation of the Russian Federation offered to host the coordination meeting to be held in Spring 1994. While some delegations proposed a coordinating role for ECE in this area, the delegations of the countries affected opposed the regionalization of the programme of international cooperation.

4. The Committee on Agriculture has in its programme of work element 09(A).2.3 "Effects on radionuclear contamination and measures for the elimination of their consequences on agriculture". A workshop was held in Minsk (Belarus) in September 1992 on "Agro-technical methods to improve soils contaminated by radionuclides". The report points to activities necessary to monitor migration of long-lived radionuclides and secondary pollution of agricultural soils; to upgrade crop and livestock technology in affected areas; and to conduct research on identification of high contamination location, rehabilitation of land taken out of use, and development of measures to prevent secondary contamination of soils by radionuclides. A follow-up workshop "Economic and social impact of radionuclear contamination on agriculture and rural areas" is planned.

5. The Timber Committee at its forty-eighth session endorsed the proposal to establish a team of specialists with the task of examining problems in the forestry and forest industry sector arising from radiation contamination. The organizational meeting was held in Gomel (Belarus) in March 1992 to define problems, to investigate possibilities for international cooperation in this area and to start activities. The detailed report was prepared as an outcome of the meeting on "Impact of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station on forest management in the radiation-contaminated areas of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

6. The first meeting of the team of specialists established in October 1992 in accordance with the decision of the Joint ECE/FAO/ILO Committee on Forest Technology, Management and Training, was held in November 1993 in Mogilev (Belarus). An international workshop on "Ways to control and resolve problems in the forestry and forest industry sector arising from radiation contamination" is scheduled for the end of 1994 as an element of the Timber Committee activities in this area.

7. The Working Party on the Chemical Industry, in accordance with the recommendation of the twenty-third session of the former Chemical Industry Committee (October 1990), has been engaged in obtaining and providing information concerning the decontamination of radioactive waste and soil and the treatment of radioactive wastewater, as well as about research institutes active in these areas. Information has been received from Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Romania and Turkey and two reports have been prepared by the United States Environmental Protection Agency, entitled "Technological Approaches to the Cleanup of Radiologically Contaminated Superfund Sites" and "Assessment of Technologies for Remediation of Radioactively Contaminated Superfund Sites". A report on the information received was submitted to the first session of the Working Party on the Chemical Industry in October 1991. The secretariat transmitted all information received from ECE member countries to the delegations of Belarus, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

8. The Working Party on Engineering Industries and Automation at its eleventh session in February 1991 invited the secretariat to assist the Government of Belarus in launching a project aimed at developing a system for the automated control of radionuclides content in primary and processed food products and invited member Governments to transmit either to the ECE secretariat or the Government of Belarus any relevant material. In response to these requests, information was received from the competent authorities in Greece, Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Information received was transmitted to the competent authorities of Belarus.

9. The secretariat has consulted the secretariat of UNIDO to consider possible forms of cooperation in the UNIDO study of the impact of the Chernobyl accident on industry in the affected areas.